

THE TIMES DAILY SERIAL STORY

Milady of the Mercenaries

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

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CHAPTER XXIII—(Continued).

THE next train for Guayana would leave at 9 o'clock. After that first day in which the news of the province had come out, the regular train schedule had been in force, subject, however, to immediate suspension, according to the proclamation posted in the station. It being but 8:30, Salvador had time to spare. He took from the cash drawer the nice, shiny, new revolver which he had bought to replace the one that Curtice had taken from him, and loaded it very carefully. For a few moments he practiced the art of looking fierce before the looking-glass, aiming the weapon at his reflection, and scowling brutally as he squinted along the sight. He could mentally see flocks of police and squads of troops fleeing as chaff before the wind at the sight of his dapper, neat, resplendent person standing so quietly, yet so resolutely, behind that gun.

For assuredly there would be fighting in the Plaza de la Reforma when the mob gathered there, and Salvador determined that he would be there, and that he would be the leader of that mob; with himself at its head it would be irresistible. And he would say—possibly he might awake upon a morning to find himself the adored darling of the populace, the preserver of their liberties, the one through whose efforts, by his undiminished courage and dauntless prowess, the republic had been saved from the yoke of the gringo dogs!

"¡Dios!" he hissed viciously between his regular, white teeth. "¡Dios! Carraño! Vive la Libertad! Muerte al presidente! Muerte al Malón!"

It was a mere whisper, this cry of the foolish little Anahuacan, posing in his boundless conceit before a fragment of mirror. But it was one of many such whispers that were being uttered at that moment—signs that foretold the storm gathering.

Revolution! Thy word had a magic influence upon the imagination of little Salvador of San Diego, and he was but one of many. It aroused a degree of enthusiasm remarkable in the young man, creating within him low passions hitherto quiescent—lusts for blood and pillage and all the rapine accompaniments of the gringo's rule. And this, it may be why he suddenly made an end to his posturing, and looking around hastily to make assurance doubly sure that he was not overheard, reopened the cash drawer, transferring its contents to his hungry pockets. The sum was not large, possibly he might not need it at all, but it was as well to take it. If the luck held, by the time another president was settled in the executive chair, Salvador might be the owner of a small fortune with which he could establish himself as proprietor of a respectable pulqueria, or even a hotel in Guayana itself, wherein Salvador would figure well as host.

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He looked up just as he had shoved the last centavo into his pocket to behold a courier of the president entering the office. The throat of Salvador dried with fear. He was discovered! Would the arm of the law catch him, the petty thief of but a moment? Was he to be incarcerated in the dread calabozo? The blood seceded from his cheeks, leaving them a curdled, mottled, dusky hue.

But no; his frightened eyes saw at once that the courier was giving all his attention to a small, stout gringo whom he sustained upon his arm. The face of the latter was pale as with recent sickness, and his feet moved with a faltering weakness.

"This is the cable office, señor," said the courier; "and yonder is the railway station. Can I be of any further assistance to you?"

"No, I thank you," replied the gringo. "I guess I can manage all right now. Gracias, señor," and he rewarded the man with a piece of money.

Salvador turned an anxious eye upon the clock; not for worlds would he have missed that train, since it was like to carry him to New York. He looked fifteen minutes of the hour; there was time to attend to this customer ere catching the express.

"Well, señor," said amiably, his eye fascinated by the gleam of a diamond upon the gringo's finger, "what can I do for you?"

The stranger clatched at the counter for support.

"When does the train leave for Guayana?" he asked faintly.

"Then I have time," he took a pen and scribbled a scraggling line of characters upon a blank.

"Have you any money?" inquired the suspicious clerk, his hand going to his hip pocket, he was taking no chances with these gringos, after his recent experience. "No messages, unless pre-paid."

"All right, I'll pay."

The man produced a piece of gold and laid it upon the counter. Salvador took it, bit it, and put it where it would do the most good; which was not in the cash drawer of the C. & S. Cable Company.

"Any change coming to me?" inquired the man.

"There is none," answered Salvador; and then he regretted that he had not demanded more.

"Very well," said Salvador, clicking off a message to New York and looked around. The gringo was twirling another gold piece and gazing at Salvador reflectively.

"I'd like a little information," he said significantly.

"Very well, be quick. The office closes at 9."

Ten minutes remained.

"Has an American by the name of Curtice been here within the last few days?"

Salvador held out his hand; the money dropped into it.

"Si, señor."

"And did he leave an address in Guayana for the answer?"

Salvador reached up and took a mass of planks from a file. Down in the bunch he found what he sought, and handed it to Mr. Halsey. It was Curtice's telegram to Hamilton.

"He left that message to be sent, but the wires were down that night. It is said that the revolutionists cut the line."

"If you, yes," Daniel ran his eye over the message and made a note of the address. "To Paseo Nuevo," he repeated.

"Wonder where that is?"

Salvador, his eye still upon the diamond in the stranger's ring, conceived a bright idea. The gringo was going to Guayana, so was Salvador. The gringo had money, and he needed some one to look out for him and his diamond; Salvador would do that to perfection. Definitely, this was his lucky night.

"The señor goes to Guayana," he asked.

"Yes."

"I also; the señor seems to be unwell. Could I assist him?"

"There's that in it for you if you will," he said; "I'll double it if you see me to the Paseo Nuevo."

Salvador dropped for a moment beneath the table and dextrously disconnected the cable; that would keep the clicking of the instrument from attracting attention. He then rapidly wrote upon a blank the following title:

"THIS OFFICE IS CLOSED PENDING REPAIRS TO THE CABLE."

Leaving the office with Daniel, he

CHAPTER XXIV.

WITH commendable promptness the express pulled into the Guayana terminal on time—that is to say, at 11 o'clock. Salvador and Daniel, the former giving his arm to the American, alighted.

"Do you have cable in this God-forsaken country?" asked Daniel. "If so, call one; I'm a pretty weak man, and I can't walk far."

Salvador helped him to a bench and made a hasty detour of the station. Returning, he reported:

"There are no cabs. The cocheros fear to be on the streets during a revolution. The señor will have to walk."

"Is it far, then, to the Paseo Nuevo?"

"Quite far."

"Well, then, take me to some place where I can get a drink; I must brace up on something, or you'll have to carry me."

"Si, señor." Salvador's tone was cheerful, filled with a spirit of willingness to oblige; nevertheless, he had no intention of allowing Daniel to patronize any one of Guayana's pulquerias. To the contrary, by hook or crook, he purposed to entice him to the lodges (grocery) of Miguel, in the Calle Santiago.

There, at the mercy of Miguel, Ximenes, and honest Salvador himself, well, they three would become possessors of a diamond ring, together with some gold; and Salvador had appraised the stone as one of price.

It was, therefore, with relief that he found the streets, though brilliantly illuminated by gas jets, deserted save for the police and a few hurrying pedestrians. The shops were darkened and closely shuttered. With a triumph of duplicity that was an inspiration, Salvador halted suddenly and struck hand to forehead with a melodramatic gesture and a cry of dismay.

"What's the matter?" demanded Daniel.

"This accursed revolution, señor, which drives men mad, so that the police close all the pulquerias; I am aggrieved that I cannot procure you that drink."

"A hotel, then? There must be one near here."

"On the further side of the city, señor."

"Confound it!" cried the young man, exasperated beyond measure. "I certainly do not have the devil's own luck! Look here, I'll go back to the station and wait while you go to the Paseo Nuevo and sell Señor Curtice to come for me. I'll be hanged if I can walk any further!"

"Stay, señor."

"Well," takes your infernal comic-opera revolution prohibit my sitting in the station?"

"No, señor, but I have a better plan. Near here—not too far for you to walk—is the small grocery of my very good friend, Miguel. It is there that my uncle, Ximenes, lives. There you could buy what you need, and drink for a trifle, whilst I go upon your errand."

"Good. That's the best yet. Give me your arm."

They were led then through the Plaza. Even the more reputable cafes were closed to business. The usual crowds were absent. The station of Malón, which the president, following the example of his predecessors had erected in the center of the public square, was surrounded by a company of barbed-wire, and the gringos, in front of the green house the bulldogs were drawn up in double rank, sitting silently upon their horses' carbines at rest.

The brave color of their uniforms—light blue, with trousers of white and top boots of soft black leather—and the gleam of the arc lamps, made them a show that one might not but observe, compelling admiration.

Daniel remarked them with a word of praise for their bearing; at which Salvador delivered a panegyric in their honor. He had no doubt that these fools of revolutionists, who rebelled for no reason at all against a just and paternal government! He would that all citizens of the republic were as peaceable, as law-abiding, as even-minded as himself.

And speaking, he helped Daniel across the Plaza as quickly as he might. The time flew on apace, and he would end this work quickly, and be ready to join with the crowd, if the insurrection broke out ere dawn.

Presently they plunged into the lower strata of the city; a place of mean, low, narrow, builded of adobe and unpainted. Here the lights were more few, the dark spaces more frequent, and the police, in numbers, patrolled the streets with greater vigilance, several of them stopping the two strangers to scrutinize them, and to listen to Salvador's accounting for their being abroad at an hour so late. But here, too, the shops were boarded and devoid of lights.

The six bridesmaids, Miss Frances Clark, Miss Marion True, Miss Ethel Brown, Miss Dorothy Buckingham, Miss Helenita Padgett and Miss Alina Moran, wore white chiffon over yellow messaline with trimmings of daisies, and carried a basket of pink roses.

They also wore short bridesmaids' veils of tulle.

John M. Smyth, of Chicago, was Mr. Owen's best man, and the ushers were Lawrence Hallberg, Walter Kuhlmeier and Kenneth Smith, of Chicago; Austin Stone and Hubert Quinter of Washington.

A reception followed immediately after the ceremony at the Highlands, and later in the evening Mr. and Mrs. Owen left Washington for their bridal trip and their future home in Chicago, where they will be at home after June 1, at the Bittersweet place. Mrs. Owen traveled in a tailored suit of dark blue serge.

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Miss Helen Taft and Her House Party On Trip Down River to Mt. Vernon

Luncheon on Dolphin Enjoyed By White House Party.

Miss Helen Taft and the house party of young people spending Easter at the White House went down to Mt. Vernon this afternoon on the Dolphin, taking luncheon on board ship.

Last night the President and Mrs. Taft entertained a small company of the younger dancing contingent of Washington society at a dance in honor of their youthful house guests. A small dinner preceded the dance. The Marine Band played in the East Room for the dancing, and a buffet supper was served throughout the evening.

Killmarcy roses formed the decorations in the dining room, and American Beauties throughout the state drawing rooms.

Mrs. Taft spent the morning in the gallery of the House, accompanied by Mrs. Eckstein and Major Butt, U. S. A.

This afternoon she will receive with the President, at the audience the Chief Executive is giving to the children of the American Revolution, at 2:30 o'clock.

Prince Koudacheff, charge d'affaires of the Russian embassy, was host at a small informal luncheon today.

Venezuelan Minister Host at Dinner.

The Venezuelan minister, Señor Rojas, was host at a dinner last evening at the legation in celebration of the one hundred and first anniversary of the independence of his country. The guests were the minister of Colombia, Señor Borda; the minister of Ecuador, Dr. Ariza; the minister of Panama, Dr. Porras; the director of the Bureau of International Republics, John Barrett; the secretary of the Colombian legation, Roberto MacDougal; Señor Flores and Señor Cordeve, of the Ecuadorian legation; the secretary of the legation of Panama, Señor Brin; assistant director of the Pan-American Union, Señor Yanes; Dr. Gil-Borges, and Señor Aristeguieta, of the Venezuelan legation staff.

Mr. and Mrs. Guy Norman were among the dinner guests of last evening.

Mrs. Charles Boughton Wood was hostess at a tea yesterday afternoon at her residence, 1613 Rhode Island avenue.

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Wife of Major Swift Will Give Bridge-Tea

Mrs. Swift, wife of Major Eben Swift, U. S. A., will entertain at a bridge-tea this afternoon at her residence, on Sixteenth street, in compliment to Mrs. Bishop, of Bridgeport, Conn., who is the house guest of Mrs. A. H. Fowler.

Mrs. James C. Pilling and Mrs. Fowler will preside at the tea table, which will be adorned with a centerpiece of spring flowers.

Mrs. Frances Ricks has invitations out for a tea Friday afternoon at the Portland.

Miss Mary Bayne, of New York, is spending some time with Miss Maitland Marshall, daughter of Gen. William L. Marshall, U. S. A., and Mrs. Marshall.

Ten Eyck Wendell and his son, Ten Eyck Wendell, Jr., who have been spending the last few days in New York at the Hotel Gotham, will return to Washington this evening.

Mrs. S. Eastman Moore, wife of Dr. Moore, will entertain at a bridge party this afternoon at her residence on Idaho Island avenue.

Miss Vaughan Becomes Bride of William R. Crute.

Miss Vera Vaughan, daughter of Dr. George Tully Vaughan and Mrs. Vaughan, was married to William R. Crute last evening at 8 o'clock, at the Foundry M. E. Church, the Rev. Dr. T. M. C. Simpson, of Lynchburg, Va., officiating, assisted by the Rev. W. R. Wedderburn, pastor of the church.

Quantities of palms, smilax, and Easter lilies adorned the church.

The bride, who was escorted and given in marriage by her father, wore a handsome gown of white satin richly embroidered in pearls and trimmed with duchesse lace on the bodice. Her long tulle veil was arranged with a spray of orange blossoms, and she carried a shower bouquet of maidenhair ferns and lilies of the valley.

Mrs. Richard J. Carter, of Danville, Va., who was the matron of honor, wore a pale pink satin veiled in marquisette, caught with clusters of chiffon roses. She carried a cluster of bridesmaids' roses.

Miss Mary Simpson, the maid of honor, wore a gown of pink satin and carried pink roses.

The bridesmaids, Miss Lillian Hill, of Kentucky, and Miss Elsie Hall and Miss Mary Duval, of Washington, wore gowns of pink and white flowered marquisette over pink satin and carried pink roses.

Little Miss Elsie Anderson, of Farmville, Va., who was flower-girl, wore a dainty frock of white swiss and lace and carried a basket of pink roses.

Frank B. Steel, of West Virginia, was best man for Mr. Crute, and the ushers were Harry Denroff, of Chicago; Charles Sanders, and W. W. Vaughan, brother of the bride.

A reception in the home of the bride's parents, on I street, followed the ceremony at the church. The house was adorned with palms and clusters of satin and white roses and blossoming plants, and a string orchestra played during the evening. Mrs. Vaughan wore a gown of lavender, charmed with satin and a basket of pink roses.

Mrs. J. M. Crute, of Farmville, Va., mother of the bridegroom, wore white satin.

Later in the evening Mr. and Mrs. Crute left for a wedding trip, the bride traveling in a suit of French blue serge, with a blue hat trimmed in grey.

Mrs. Crute will make their home in Farmville, Va.

Miss Williams to Wed Frederick de Courcy Faust.

Mrs. and Mrs. Gardner F. Williams announce the engagement of their daughter, Miss